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Two civilians complete world's first-ever private spacewalk

US entrepreneur Jared Isaacman and SpaceX engineer Sarah Gillis on Thursday became the first non-astronauts to perform spacewalk. Isaacman opened the hatch of SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft and made his way to open space. After 15 minutes, he was replaced by Gillis. Two other crew members remained strapped to their seats to monitor from inside. The SpaceX Polaris Dawn mission, which lifted off from Cape Canaveral, is yet another major milestone for the space firm | P12

Join hands for Democracy
Government of Karnataka, in association with Rotary International / Civil Society / NGOs is organising the
Longest
HUMAN CHAIN
From Bidar to Chamarajanagar
On this 15 Sept. 2024 from 9.30 am to 10.00 am
2,500 Kms
25 Lakh People • 10 Lakh Saplings • 5,000 Preambles
Liberty | Equality | Fraternity
Dr. H.C. Mahadevappa
In 2 days
9482 300 400

MANOJ PAREKAR

SITARAM YECHURY
12 AUGUST 1952 - 12 SEPTEMBER 2024

EXIT, STAGE LEFT: A COMRADE TO ALL

SANTWANA BHATTACHARYA
EDITOR

A mop of frizzy hair that placed him in a permanent Seventies, a boyish face that seemed to be built for laughter, eyes that were always smiling (though of late touched by sadness), a manner that was the very definition of amiable, speech that was erudite but easy, persuasive rather than offensive, smooth but always guided by conviction.

Of all the talk of revolution that swirled around, he must have been the gentlest apostle. Which is why everyone, even the fiercest antagonists, will recall Sitaram Yechury, the person, as much as what he stood for. With fondness and not a trace of rancour. That's what places him in a rare category among politicians—he was one of those who could converse with anyone, everyone, as a friend. Ideology defined him, but did not exhaust his inventory. An endangered tribe these days, it has lost one of its best, and not at the best of times. One would have to say Comrade Yechury, at 72, is gone too soon.

Most appraisals of his career will read Yechury in terms of his well-known trajectory as a Communist frontman, starting from his days as a student leader during a definitive era at Jawaharlal Nehru University and analyse whether that promise was filled out or not in terms of building the Left movement in India. Only few realise what a talent India has been deprived of—in universalist terms.

A political life that was oath-bound to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) meant that its puritanical aloofness in New Delhi always applied to him—and always kept him out of government. In fact, strangely for a politician, the question never seemed to even arise. The loss was perhaps India's as much as the Left's.

Judge by what he managed at the highest levels, even as a faceless, behind-the-scenes interlocutor. The Manmohan Singh government's final nuclear deal with the US—with conditions favourable to India—was a document that bore the stamp of an exhaustive, point-by-point, clause-by-clause, process of critique and emendation conducted by Yechury's team. Imagine a deal with capitalist America being rewritten by a Communist. Ironic that his party finally withdrew support to the UPA on that very deal.

Around those same days, his mediation was accepted, and bore fruit, within Nepal's polity and vis-a-vis its India relations, at a particularly dark time in its history.

CONTINUED ON: P9

● Live telecast sticking point ● Both sides refuse to yield ● Govt cites court case to block it ● Didn't ask CM to quit, say docs

No talks for 2nd straight day, Didi offers to resign

Junior doctors at the dharna site in Kolkata on Thursday | PTI

GUV TURNS THE SCREWS FURTHER

Governor CV Ananda Bose on Thursday said he will not share any public platform with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in view of people's outcry over RG Kar. Bose said he will also socially boycott her

7 LAKH PEOPLE HIT BY AGITATION: CM

Mamata claimed that around 27 patients have died and approximately 7 lakh people have suffered because of the ongoing ceasework agitation of the junior doctors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

ATTEMPTING to change the optics following widespread protests by people from all walks of life against the horrific rape-murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here on August 9, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday dramatically offered to quit.

"I do not care for my chair and am ready to resign for the sake of the people. I, too, want justice," Mamata said at the state secretariat soon after the proposed talks between her government and the protesting junior doctors failed as the medics refused to enter the venue following rejection of their demand to telecast it live for transparancy.

The junior doctors, too, expressed disappointment with the talks falling through and said they would continue their agitation. They added that they were open for talks.

Earlier in the day, senior doctors of state-run hospitals warned that they would join the protests if any action is taken against their junior colleagues protesting against the rape-murder. The junior doctors said that they were disappointed at the CM talking about her chair since they never wanted her resignation.

Mamata said the meeting couldn't be live-streamed since the matter is sub-judice. "What the Supreme Court can, we can't," she said, hinting at external political forces influencing a section of the doctors.

"I did my best, but I apologise to the people for failing to bring them to the negotiating table. There are instructions from outside, asking some of the junior doctors not to sit for negotiations," she said.

Earlier in the day, chief secretary Manoj Pant sent an email inviting the junior doctors, holding sit-in outside the state health department headquarters at Salt Lake since Tuesday, for the meeting with the CM at 5 pm. Though the email had mentioned a 15-member delegation, the government later blinked and allowed 30 doctors as desired by the protesting medics. The doctors reached the secretariat around 5.25 pm, but stayed put outside the venue for over two hours.

"We made recording arrangements. There should be mutual trust," Pant said.

We have tolerated a lot of canards for the last 33 days. I thought the doctors would engage in talks for the sake of the patients and on humanitarian grounds — Mamata Banerjee

Oppn seeks equitable tax share

It is important that states should get funds which do not come with conditions

Pinarayi Vijayan, Kerala chief minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ TPuram

A conclave of the finance ministers from five Opposition-ruled states here on Thursday flagged concerns over the rise in surcharges and cesses and the low share for states from the divisible pool of taxes. The conclave, hosted by the Kerala government, was attended by Telangana deputy CM and finance minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Tamil Nadu finance minister Thangam Thennarasu, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, and Punjab finance minister Sardar Harpal Singh Cheema, besides Kerala finance minister K N Balagopal.

Inaugurating the conclave, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said states need a higher share from the taxes collected by the Union government, adding that Kerala has been demanding that the states' share be raised to 50% considering the "vertical fiscal imbalance between the taxing powers and expenditure obligations of the Union and the states".

The meet also discussed the approach towards the 16th Finance Commission and issues of fiscal federalism.

"We need a strategy to reward performing states while handholding the laggards," Kerala FM Balagopal said.

Telangana minister Bhatti said the Finance Commission should ensure fair and equitable distribution of resources among the Centre and states.

TN minister Thennarasu said, "Effective devolution is less due to imposition of cess and surcharges."

Thennarasu said states must get 50% share in central tax and asked the 16th Finance Commission to ensure that reliance on discretionary grants is reduced.

Punjab minister Cheema said the GST rollout limited the fiscal autonomy of states.

CAP CESSES AT 5%, SAYS BYRE GOWDA

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the Finance Commission should recommend capping cesses/surcharges at 5%, adding that anything above that should be part of the divisible pool. Now, surcharge and cess are not part of this pool.

Properties destroyed in Wednesday's violence in Nagamangala | UDAYASHANKAR S

Nagamangala tense, 20 shops burnt, 56 held

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Nagamangala

TENSION prevails in Nagamangala after a communal clash during a procession taken out in the town to immerse Ganesha idols on Wednesday night.

Police have arrested 56 people in connection with the clash. Prohibitory orders have been clamped across the town and parts of Mysuru-Nagamangala highway. Educational institutions, shops and other commercial establishments in the town remained closed on Thursday.

According to sources, more people are likely to be arrested as police are examining the CCTV footage obtained from the affected areas. An argument broke out between youths from a particular community and those in the procession near a mosque on Mysuru-Nagamangala road. Soon, they exchanged blows and went on a rampage attacking shops and other business establishments.

They indulged in stone-throwing and even hurled petrol bombs. Some miscreants tried to disrupt power supply in the area. Twenty shops were set ablaze. The clash soon spread to the outskirts of Nagamangala and the highway where miscreants attacked vehicles with iron rods, logs and stones.

Additional police personnel, who were rushed to spot, brought the situation under control. Meanwhile, a large number of people, including women and children, gathered in front of the police station on Thursday morning and pleaded for the release of their family members who have been arrested.

Some shopkeepers said that around 15 people took advantage of the situation and set fire to shops near the police station. Rizwan, a shopkeeper, said though he had donated money to the organisers of Ganesha idol immersion procession in the town, the violent mob burnt his shop. "I opened the shop after borrowing Rs 20 lakh from a finance company. I have many Hindu friends. My shop was burnt when I went to see my ailing mother who is under treatment in a local hospital," he said. Shivaraj and Bheemesh of Santhebeedi said the trouble started all of a sudden and miscreants set ablaze their shops. The police should take stern action against the miscreants, they added. Former MLA Suresh Gowda sought a high-level inquiry into the violence. He said that it was a planned attack as petrol bombs, knives and other weapons were used to attack those in the procession. MORE ON P4

CANNOT SAY IT IS COMMUNAL: DR G

According to Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara, it was not a communal clash. "There have been clashes, but we cannot say it is communal. We will not allow it to become big," he said. P4

EXPRESS READ

Govt postpones PSI exam again

BENGALURU: After protests and demands, the Karnataka Government on Thursday decided to postpone the examination to recruit 402 police sub-inspectors. The examination was scheduled to be conducted on September 22 | P3

Weinstein indicted on addl sex crimes

NEW YORK: Disgraced ex-movie mogul Harvey Weinstein has been indicted on additional sex crimes charges in New York ahead of a retrial in his landmark #MeToo case, Manhattan prosecutors said at a court hearing Thursday.

WITH THIS ISSUE

CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE — 42 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

ON TRACK

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah takes a Metro ride from KR Pura to Vidhana Soudha, as part of his Bengaluru City rounds on Thursday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL | P2

Retail inflation inches up as base effect diminishes

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

RETAIL inflation stayed below RBI's target of 4% for the second straight month in August at 3.65%, though it is a tad higher than July's 3.60%. The uptick is due to a 5.3% annual rise in food prices, led by vegetables and fruits.

According to experts, a favourable base effect helped retail inflation stay below 4% in the past two months but this effect could fade from September, leading to spike in Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Vegetable prices shot up 10.71% year-on-year in August, though prices dropped 2.51% on a month-on-month basis.

"The overall outlook for the agriculture sector has improved due to a good monsoon and improved kharif sowing. However, challenges remain, particularly with the uneven distribution of rainfall," said Rajani Sinha, chief economist at Care Ratings.

Core inflation (CPI excluding food and beverages, and fuel prices) also eased to 3.5% in August from 3.6% in July. Analysts feel this is a temporary dip, and the same may go up through the rest of the financial year.

Meanwhile, industrial output in July grew at 4.8%, bettering the 4.7% growth witnessed in the previous month.

BIDEN

TO HOST QUAD LEADERS IN DELAWARE HOMETOWN

PM Narendra Modi will join his counterparts from Australia and Japan in Wilmington, next weekend, on the invitation of the US president